

The Progressive Presidents



Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, and Woodrow Wilson

Progressive Presidents

✎ **Theodore Roosevelt** is the most prominent “Progressive” President in United States History. He consistently supported Progressive goals like consumer protection, government regulation of corporations, conservation, and the empowerment of voters.

✎ **William Howard Taft**, who had been Roosevelt’s Vice President, pursued many of the same goals TR had, and was particularly zealous in his enforcement of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act.



Woodrow Wilson

Although Woodrow Wilson had a very different world view than Roosevelt or Taft, he shared their general commitment to Progressive ideas. While he was President, most of the Progressive Amendments were ratified.

16th Amendment: Graduated Income Tax

17th Amendment: Election of Senators.

18th Amendment: Prohibition

19th Amendment: Woman's Suffrage

On a personal level, though, Wilson had plenty of flaws. Most concerning was his open racism. He re-segregated Washington, D.C., after much progress had been made on racial equality.



The Progressive Goals of President Theodore Roosevelt

Theodore Roosevelt's Progressive Agenda, or "The Square Deal":

1. **Trustbuster**: Breaking up trusts and creating government regulation of corporations.
2. **Protecting consumers** by regulating businesses.
3. **Conservation** of resources and environmental protection.
4. **Protecting worker's rights** and supporting some unions.



Both TR and William Howard Taft were Republicans and both supported Progressive goals. They would be rivals in 1912.

The Sherman Anti-Trust Act

∞ The **Sherman Anti-Trust Act** was passed in 1890; however, it was not originally used for its intended purpose. Some judges used the law to restrict unions, arguing that they created an unfair market for labor by demanding higher wages for workers! But in 1890, Theodore Roosevelt began to use the law the way it was meant to be used by suing the Northern Securities Trust, Armour Meats, and the Standard Oil Trust, all of which had hurt consumers by engaging in anti-competitive practices.



Roosevelt the Trustbuster

∞ Theodore Roosevelt went after the great industrialists when he felt they were out of line. In the political cartoon to the right, he is portrayed as Hercules in the crib – for going after John Rockefeller’s Standard Oil Trust. He also went after The Northern Securities Trust – a railroad company owned by J.P. Morgan – and the Armour Meat Trust, among many others.



The Anthracite Coal Strike of 1902



Theodore Roosevelt was not always on the side of unions, when the Anthracite Coal Strike of 1902 threatened to leave Americans without coal to heat their homes, he sided with the striking workers. It was the first time the government had supported the collective demands of labor.

In the past, the government had almost always sided with the owners of businesses during labor strikes:

☞ *The Railroad Strike of 1877*

☞ *The Homestead Strike of 1892*

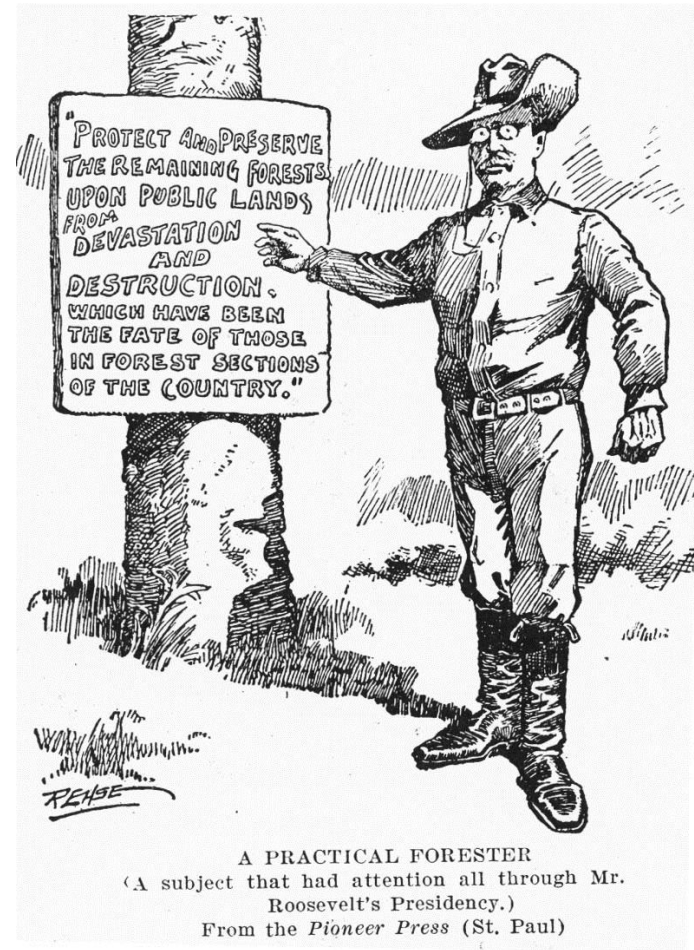
☞ *The Pullman Strike of 1894*

In each case, either the United States Army or state militias had been brought in to put striking laborers back to work – or, to protect strikebreakers.

In 1902, though, Roosevelt broke with tradition when he served as an arbitrator to end the Anthracite Coal Strike. He sided with workers, who sought higher wages and improved safety conditions!

The United States Forest Service

- ∞ Theodore Roosevelt was perhaps the most devoted conservationist ever to serve as President of the United States. Roosevelt established the United States Forest Service in order to both protect the environment and to preserve natural resources for future generations.
- ∞ Roosevelt established and expanded several national parks. He was influenced to a large extent by conservationist John Muir.



The National Parks System

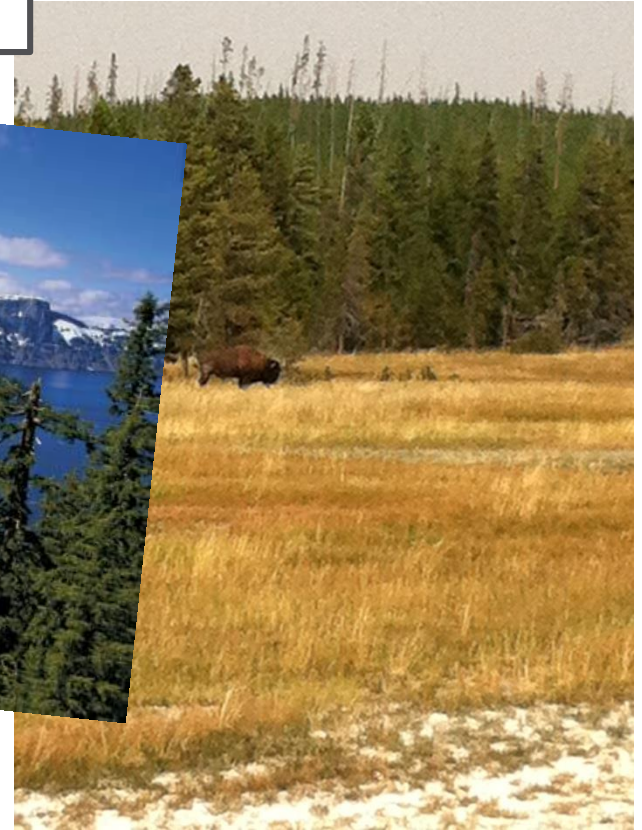
Yosemite National Park



Crater Lake National Park

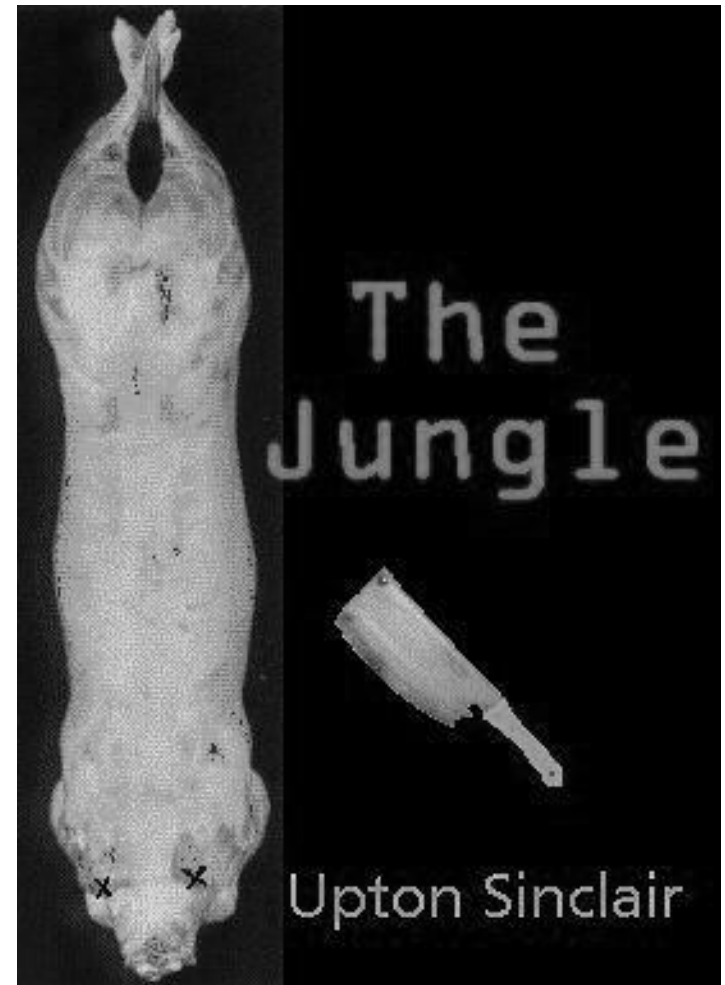


Yellowstone National Park



Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*

- ∞ Upton Sinclair's novel, *The Jungle* was a socialist worker's tract. Above all, his intention was to let Americans know that immigrants working in the meatpacking plants of major US cities had the deck stacked against them.
- ∞ A secondary issue in the novel was the unbelievable filth encountered in the meatpacking industry itself.
- ∞ When the public outcry over the conditions described in *The Jungle* led to new government regulations of the meatpacking industry, Sinclair claimed, "I aimed at the public's heart, and by accident hit its stomach!"



The Meat Inspection Act & The Pure Food and Drug Act

- ∞ **The Pure Food and Drug Act** was passed in order to guarantee that the public knew what went into its foods and medicines. At the time, canned meat could be – shall we say – mysterious? Patent medicines were often alcohol based or contained opiates. It made you feel better – just not for very long! The Food and Drug Administration was created to clean up the industries.
- ∞ **The Meat Inspection Act** was passed as well, creating the United States Department of Agriculture to insure the safety of consumers in purchasing meats and dairy products like milk and eggs.



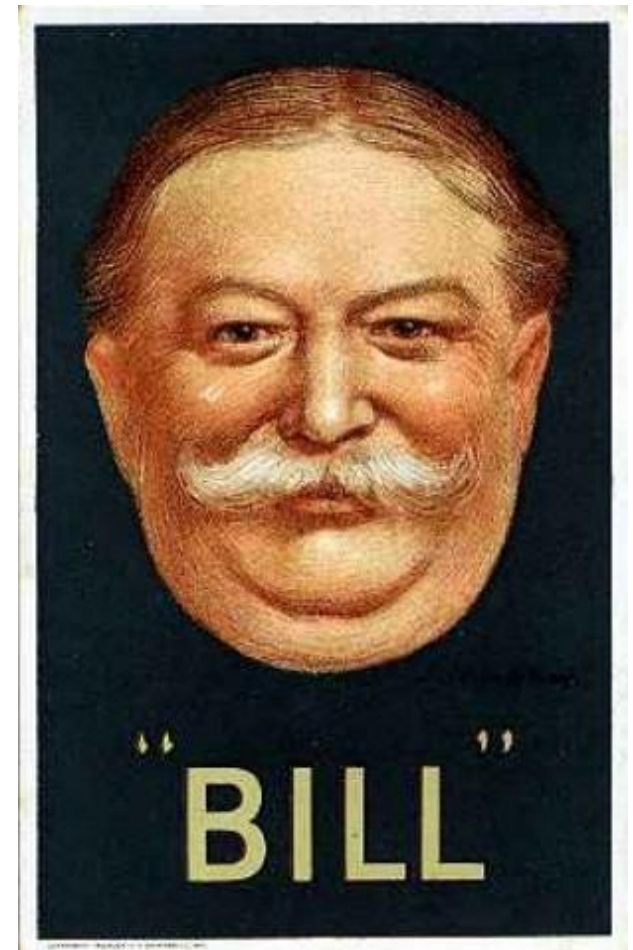
William Howard Taft

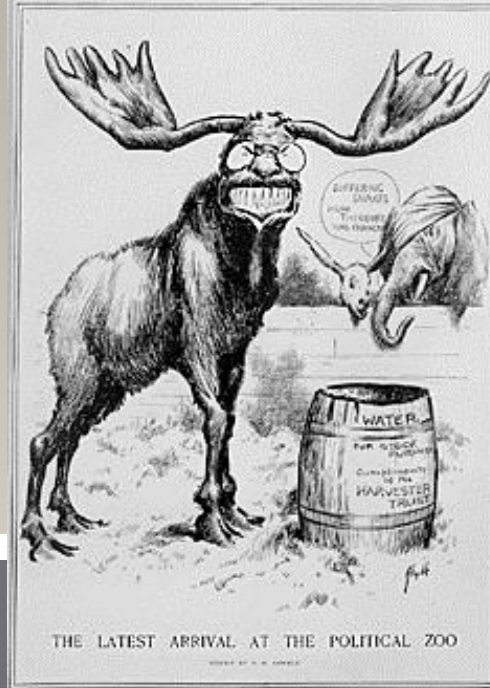


It's such a cheap shot, but they really did have to install a new bathtub in the White House for this guy. He was really a very accomplished man: Governor of the Philippines, Secretary of War, Vice President, President, and – a final accomplishment – the only US President to ever go on to become a Supreme Court Justice.

William Howard Taft

- ∞ William Howard Taft had a number of important goals as President of the United States, and a number of accomplishments:
- ∞ 1. **Trustbusting** – In his four years as President, Taft brought lawsuits against more companies than Theodore Roosevelt had in seven.
- ∞ 2. **The Graduated Income Tax** – created by the 16th Amendment, this was ratified under the Presidency of William Howard Taft.
- ∞ 3. **Ending child labor** – by passing laws against the practice.
- ∞ 4. **Conservation** – William Howard Taft was a strong supporter of conservation practices, although a dispute over his Secretary of the Interior – Richard A. Ballinger – damaged his reputation on the issue somewhat.





The Election of 1912



The Election of 1912

- ∞ This race was actually a four-way race, and each of the candidates embraced Progressive ideas in one way or another.
- ∞ **William Howard Taft** was the incumbent, and sought re-election as the Republican Party's candidate in 1912.
- ∞ **Former President Theodore Roosevelt** wanted to run for a third term in office as a Republican, but when the party would not nominate him, he founded his own party, the Progressives. It was soon better known as the Bull Moose Party.
- ∞ **Woodrow Wilson** was the Democratic candidate for President, beside himself with joy to be running against not one, but two, Republicans.
- ∞ **Eugene V. Debs** – the Socialist Candidate – had very little likelihood of winning the Electoral College; however, he did win about 5% of the popular vote!

President Woodrow Wilson

Woodrow Wilson's Presidency would eventually be defined by the United States involvement in World War I; however, when he ran for President, he wanted to focus on domestic issues and progressive reforms.

Wilson's "New Freedom":

- ∞ 1. **Destroy all monopolies** and aggressively enforce anti-trust laws. While he was President, the **Clayton Anti-Trust Act** was passed to make this easier.
- ∞ 2. **Reform the Banking System** in the United States – **The Federal Reserve Act** was created.
- ∞ 3. **Regulate trade on Wall Street** with the **Federal Trade Commission**.

Although most of these ideas were put forth with good intentions, they were essentially toothless laws. See the Great Depression!

